

clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe . . . a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.”

The Congress, by Public Law 100–307, has called on our citizens to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society and to honor the religious diversity our freedom permits by recognizing annually a “National Day of Prayer.”

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 6, 1999, as a National Day of Prayer. I encourage the citizens of this great Nation to pray, each in his or her own manner, seeking strength from God to face the problems of today, requesting guidance for the uncertainties of tomorrow, and giving thanks for the rich blessings that our country has enjoyed throughout its history.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 11.

Interview With Tom Brokaw of the National Broadcasting Corporation Aboard Air Force One May 4, 1999

Russian Peace Initiative

Tom Brokaw. Mr. President, diplomatic flurry may be an overstatement—there’s something percolating, obviously. Is there anything that you find encouraging at all in what we’ve seen in the last couple of days with the Russian connection?

The President. Yes. I am encouraged because, first of all, I think it’s a good thing for the Russians to be aggressively involved in trying to find a diplomatic solution, as long as it’s a real solution to the problem. The

conditions that we and our NATO Allies have laid out are not designed to win some victory over Serbia; they’re designed to establish the minimum necessary for the mission to succeed, for the Kosovars to go home to live in security and autonomy.

To do that, you’ve got to get the Serb forces out, and you have to have an international force there with NATO at its core, so it will work, so the Serbs will come back, so the armed elements within the Kosovar Albanians—excuse me, so the Albanians will come back, the Kosovars will come back—and so the armed elements there will disarm and will accept the peace.

Now, that’s what’s necessary to happen. And I think if the Russians get to the point where they can truly embrace that position and argue it to the Serbs, I think that will be very helpful.

Mr. Brokaw. But does Chernomyrdin buy your scenario?

The President. Well, what he’s tried to do, obviously, is to assess what he thinks Mr. Milosevic will buy. But there’s a subtext here I think is important to get out, too, which is this shows that the Russians are more than willing, themselves, to be involved in a peace-keeping force, and that others coming out of that neck of the woods who share religious and ethnic ties to the Serbs may be willing to participate, as well, which will give the right feel and look and substance to this.

You know, I’ve always said we would only go in there if we were permitted to protect the Serb minority, as well as the Kosovar Albanians. So I think that this is basically helpful. But I don’t want to oversell it because there’s been no kind of diplomatic breakthrough here. It cannot be a bad thing to have a man of Mr. Chernomyrdin’s stature, his obvious closeness to President Yeltsin, vigorously doing what he’s doing out there. I think that’s important.

Mr. Brokaw. But there’s not even a small light at the end of the tunnel at this point?

The President. I wouldn’t say that. I think the Russians have a much clearer understanding of why we have taken the position we have taken. And as they’ve gotten into the details of it, I think they understand what it would take actually to have this work. As I said to Mr. Chernomyrdin, I said, “You

know, if we try to do this the way Mr. Milosevic originally said he wanted it done, we'd be back here in 8 months having the same meeting all over again."

Mr. Brokaw. If you were an Albanian refugee—and there are now about a million, we think, altogether—would you go back home without the United States as the guarantor of your safety?

The President. No. I wouldn't go back home without the United States and NATO, without our allies being involved there, not after what they've been through.

And it's very important—I keep saying this to the American people—it's very important, you can't divorce what happened in Kosovo from what happened for 4 years in Bosnia. These people know what not just ethnic cleansing, but religious cleansing is. The Muslims know what they've been subject to. And they want to go home, and it's soon enough from the expulsions that they will go home, eagerly, if they know they're going to be safe, if they know they're going to have their autonomy.

And I think it's just imperative to the Russians, the more they come to grips with what it would take to make this work—instead of thinking about winners and losers—what would it take to make this work? Because they say they're for having the Kosovars go home, being safe, having autonomy—they understand that—then these conditions are what is necessary to make it work.

You say, well, what's in it for the Serbs? Well, first of all, they shouldn't be rewarded for ethnic cleansing. But secondly, there is something in it. What's in it is that the Russians and others can be involved in the peace-keeping force, so it's not just the United States and NATO. Secondly, there's going to have to be a huge effort not only at rebuilding but at building a whole different future for the Balkans and southeastern Europe that bring these folks together around common economic goals. None of that can happen until this gets done.

Expenses Incurred in Kosovo Action

Mr. Brokaw. Do you think that the United States—do you think that the American people have a full appreciation of just how long and expensive now our investment

in the Balkans will be as a result of what's happened just in the last few months?

The President. Well, I believe that they—first of all, the lion's share of our expense is being borne out because they're carrying a majority of the military burden, and we're paying quite a lot for the humanitarian assistance, which I think the American people want us to do, and the American citizens have been very generous in their private donations. I believe that the Europeans will carry the lion's share of the burden, the rebuilding and building an economic unit there that can relate to the EU and grow together.

But it's in our interest to participate in that. That's a lot cheaper than having another European war. This is a lot cheaper than having another European war of the kind that we saw in the 20th century. And so I wish we didn't have to spend the money on this. I'll be happy to support contributing to the reconstruction of the area, and I think it will repay itself many times over in avoided problems and in new economic partners.

Mr. Brokaw. A lot of people in the United States are now saying, how in the world can we have the Russians represent our interests there? We've spent 50 years trying to keep them out of the Balkans; now we're inviting them in. It's not in the interest of the United States to do that, they say.

The President. But it is, if we all have the same goals. The Russians have worked with us side-by-side, our militaries, in Bosnia. We have worked well there together. We have served in the same area. The Russians have been willing to work with an American commander; they have related well to each other. The Russians have a relationship with NATO. We've done joint training exercises together.

So if the Russians, who, after all, are now a democracy, will embrace the same objectives and will go in there in a way that ensures that there's no discrimination against the Serb minority in Kosovo, we can make a lot of progress, and we can work together.

That's what we want. I've been working for a partnership for a democratic Russia since the day I got here, and I believe before I was here—I think that's what President Bush wanted to achieve with President Yeltsin. That enables us to keep reducing our

nuclear stockpile. That enables us to secure the safety of their nuclear weapons. That enables us to work with them in positive ways to keep the transfer of dangerous technology from countries that shouldn't have it.

So all these things I think are very important. There is a way that we could get a very large benefit here by strengthening our partnership with Russia over the long-run. But the basic conditions have to be met, because without the basic conditions being met, the mission will not succeed; we'll never get the Kosovars back home. We'll never have real security and autonomy. We'll have continuing military uprisings among the Kosovars, unless the basic conditions are met.

NOTE: The interview began at 6:36 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Brussels, Belgium. In his remarks, he referred to Viktor Chernomyrdin, Special Envoy and former Prime Minister, and President Boris Yelstin of Russia; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). This interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Tom Brokaw of the National Broadcasting Corporation in Spangdahlem, Germany

May 5, 1999

Appreciation of the Military

Tom Brokaw. What do you get out of a trip like this, when you come over here and see these people and all the armaments and all this emotion that you, as Commander in Chief, obviously are responsible for?

The President. Well, first of all, it's very reassuring because you see how hard they train, how hard they prepare, and how well they execute. So, in that sense, it's reassuring.

Secondly, I get to thank them and to tell them that the American people are with them and grateful for what they're doing. And of course, this morning, I got the very important briefing from General Clark and General Naumann about where we are in this campaign, what we need to do and what their recommendations are.

So from a purely military point of view, in addition to trying to solidify the unity of our coalition—meeting with the Belgian and the German Prime Ministers—and looking at the humanitarian effort and seeing the refugees, seeing the service people is very, very important. And of course, by coming here, the American people see what they're doing more because of your coverage of it.

Mr. Brokaw. This is a real evolution for you. Like so many people in your generation, you came of age when there was an unpopular war, and you had mixed feelings at best about the role of the military in our lives and so on. Did you ever think that you would find yourself running a war as Commander in Chief in those days?

The President. No. Of course, I never thought I'd be President, and I certainly never thought, therefore, about this. But when I became President and because I hadn't been in the military myself and because I'd been a Governor and, therefore, had never been on the Armed Services Committee in the Senate or the House or otherwise directly dealt with defense policy, I determined to spend an awful lot of time on it. And I have spent major, major chunks of time on bases all over the world and all over the United States and at the Pentagon in briefings learning about how the military works, learning about how these weapon systems work, learning about the human challenges of military life today, and trying to make sure that these people have the support they need to do their job. I think the American people almost universally do understand that they're not only very admirable people but they are very, very good at what they do.

Success of Kosovo Action

Mr. Brokaw. Military people talk about the fog of combat when they're fighting. Isn't there also a kind of fog of running a war? Didn't you expect to be farther along at this point? We're now 6 weeks into the operation.

The President. Well, I didn't really have expectations about the timing because I think the timing depends upon things that are, to some extent, beyond our control. That is, the timing depends upon the weather. Even though we've now flown 15,000 sorties, not